

B.J. Best

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## KING'S QUEST

The only good fairytales are fatal: witches in cauldrons, a giant like some unholy hailstone, the wolf belching out a red bonnet. Forget the narcoleptic princess, the adjectival dwarves. Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie and you'll die eating crow.

Mirror, mirror, all you've told me this past week is the sixth gray hair. If I stuck a feather in my cap, what would you call it? —Denial.

Too often I hate the kingdom bequeathed to me. Some glacial terracide rounded to gentility. The barred owl behind Fox Hill asks, Who cooks for you?, and I say, Tonight I'm making chicken kiev for Erin. Off Cty Hwy NN, the rotting trees in the swamp freeze like astonished soldiers. Draco won't breathe unless I blow cigarette smoke to the sky. The sun blinks like popped bubble gum each evening and all I can think of is missing her even though she's in the next room.

My mother once gave me a sachet with a three-masted clipper printed on it, something to put in your sock drawer, that also said I love you! At baby showers, I'm told, sometimes they play complete-the-nursery-rhyme. Expecting mothers become hysterical because they can't do them all.